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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese- and English-language dailies gave significant reporting and editorial coverage September 1-4 to the remarks by White House National Security Council senior director for Asian affairs Dennis Wilder last Friday that neither Taiwan nor the Republic of China is a state in the international community, and that Washington finds the DPP's attempts to call for a UN referendum "a little bit perplexing." News coverage also focused on the Blue and the Green camps' interpretation of, and reaction to, Wilder's remarks; on President Chen Shui-bian's interview with Sanlih TV last Friday; on Beijing's alleged "opposition" to the KMT's proposed UN referendum; and on a Taiwan business tycoon who was reportedly barred from leaving China because of a dispute with its Chinese partner over the ownership of a department store in Beijing. The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" front-paged a banner headline September 1 that read "United States: Neither Taiwan nor ROC is a State." The same paper also ran a banner headline on page two the same day that said "Bian: Taiwan Will Join the UN as a New Country."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" criticized the United States for humiliating Taiwan and thus harming its own interests. A "Liberty Times" column solemnly protested the United States for unreasonably intervening in Taiwan's efforts to pursue the normalization of the country. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" chimed in saying Washington is intensifying its efforts to block Taiwan's UN referendum. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" said Taiwan needs not worry about the meeting between U.S. President George W. Bush and his Chinese counterpart at the APEC leaders' meeting this week. An editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily," however, said that Taiwan's UN referendum is nothing but a "birdcage game" that will not change anything. A "China Times" editorial, on the other hand, said the situation will deteriorate if the United States continues to handle Taiwan's push for the UN referendum with a rude and aloof approach. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said President Chen and President Bush are now engaged in a race to see who is the coward and who will back down from the game first. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" argued that the ROC's statehood has never been "undecided," as claimed by Wilder. End summary.

A) "The United States Humiliates Taiwan and Thus Harms Its Own Interests"

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Tzou Jiing-wen noted in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (9/3):

"... Taiwan will hold a UN referendum in tandem with the presidential election in March, 2008, and there is no way this reality will be changed. Both the DPP and the KMT proposed their own [versions of the] UN referendum, and the party that withdraws its referendum first will surely fall apart. This fact reflects the

self-determination and dignity of Taiwan voters. As a result, no matter how mercilessly Uncle Sam beats Taiwan, it will never achieve the objective of getting Taiwan not to hold a referendum. The only 'beneficial effect' left [for the United States] to humiliate Taiwan is thus to let Communist China get what it wants. ...

"But the fact that Uncle Sam has spent so much time and energy demanding that Taiwan subject itself to servile treatment that even a sub-colony does not deserve will stir up anti-U.S. sentiment in its most loyal ally. The United States' trampling on its American values will also leave a deep mark in the hearts of [our] 23 million people, forcing the Taiwan government no longer to dare to bow to Washington's will when weighing American interests in Taiwan in the future. In particular, Taiwan's previous strategic line of following no one but the United States will face challenges from public opinion and thus be forced to find another way out. ... Once the Taiwan-U.S. alliance becomes loose, the biggest beneficiary will be China. Why on earth did the United States do what it did? It is such a huge mistake."

#### B) "Taiwan's Destiny"

The "Free Talk" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] noted (9/1):

"... It is an irrevocable fact that Taiwan is an independent sovereign state, and that it and China do not come under the jurisdiction of one other. Taiwan does not need the United States to define its national status, nor does the United States have the right to do so. [White House National Security Council senior director for Asian affairs] Dennis Wilder's remarks, which were full of hegemonic thinking, have unreasonably intervened in the Taiwan people's efforts in pursuit of the normalization of their country. Taiwan thus must solemnly protest to the United States.

"China attempts to annex Taiwan and has brutally and savagely

suppressed Taiwan's national status, but the fact that Taiwan is independent outside China can best meet the common interests of the international community, including the United States and other Asia-Pacific nations. Wilder denied Taiwan's national status and echoed China's position, a move that is akin to pushing Taiwan toward being jointly managed by the United States and China and towards China's jaws of death. We want to question strongly whether Wilder's remarks represent a change in the United States' policy toward Taiwan. Did his remarks violate U.S. interests and the United States' Taiwan Relations Act? Did he make the remarks just for the short-term benefit of the United States colluding with China, regardless of the will of the 23 million people in Taiwan?"

#### C) "Friends Can Be Worse Than Enemies"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (9/4):

"... Forty-five years later, as President Chen Shui-bian continues to rattle Washington by seeking to give his people the rights that morally should be theirs, we can expect the US government will intensify its efforts to block his every move. In the coming months, a plethora of news, speeches and rumors seeded here and there will dapple politics and media here and in the US. Most of it will be deniable, some even outright false, but like a full orchestra the sum of the seemingly dissonant instruments will coalesce into a symphony of sorts. And the theme will be an undeniable one, for it has become obvious that Washington wants the troublesome Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) out of power. Unless its presidential candidate, Frank Hsieh, drastically changes course -- which would represent a betrayal of the DPP's raison d'etre -- he, too, will be subjected to similar propaganda.

"The US is an unequalled master at the game and, when it didn't achieve it via the CIA or militarily, it has used its political and economic clout, as well as its conservative media, to interfere in foreign elections and, occasionally, change governments. Ideological opponents, suspected communists, alleged state sponsors of terrorism or would-be nuclear proliferators are not alone in facing the threat of Washington's pressure. As the Diefenbaker example shows us, even

its closest, democratic allies can fall from grace with Washington.  
..."

#### D) "APEC Meet Holds No Big Worries"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (9/4):

"In a news briefing August 30, United States National Security Council senior adviser Dennis Wilder confirmed that U.S. President George W. Bush and People's Republic of China State Chairman Hu Jintao will discuss the issue of Taiwan's proposed referendums on membership in the United Nations when the two leaders meet in a bilateral summit during the annual Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum leadership meetings, which began Sunday in Sydney, Australia. The Bush-Hu meeting is widely seen as a thermometer of the heat in the triangular relationship between the U.S., the PRC and Taiwan and every nuance in the wording of statements in the wake of the meeting will be scrutinized, interpreted and spun by Taiwan's media and politicians. ...

"Nevertheless, despite the controversy triggered by the distortion of Wilder's remarks into a supposed claim that 'Taiwan is not a country,' we believe such worries may be somewhat exaggerated and may reflect the ingrained lack of confidence or even cowardice of politicians and pundits in the former ruling party's camp. ... From the standpoint of Chen and other DPP politicians who believe that Taiwan is doing the right thing by applying to enter the U.N., any fallout from the Bush-Hu mini-summit will be important but not critical to the triangular relations between Taiwan, the U.S. and the PRC and will not endanger the long-lasting friendship between the U.S. and Taiwan for several reasons. First, the cross-strait issue is fundamentally a political matter, and APEC remains first and foremost a multilateral economic forum. ...

"Hence, while Hu may attempt to put pressure on Bush to take a harder stand against Taiwan's proposed referendum on entry into the U.N., the wording of any reply by the U.S. president is likely to be abstract and vague. As the campaign to the November 2008 presidential election heats up, Bush also has to be careful about the possibility that he and his Republican Party may be hurt by criticizing Taiwan and President Chen too sharply over the proposed U.N. referendum and Taiwan's application to join the U.N., especially if Washington is perceived as ganging up with the Chinese Communist regime in the PRC to suppress Taiwan's democracy.

"Thirdly, as Washington is striving to rebuild its political capital in the region, any display of collaboration with the PRC to suppress

democracy in Taiwan directly conflicts with Bush's own stated goal of 'bringing democracy and freedom to the world' and will be seen as a sign of craven surrender on the ideological front to the PRC's 'rising Chinese nationalism' and neo-authoritarianism in the region and in the U.N. as well. Fourthly, as the proposal for Taiwan to strive to enter the U.N. has overwhelming multi-partisan support, open opposition by Washington to this democratic demand could well fuel disappointment with Washington and spur anti-American sentiments among the traditionally pro-American 'pro-green' community. ..."

#### E) "Save China's Face"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 530,000] editorialized (9/1):

"... Frankly speaking, the United States' making a posture will not have any substantive influence on Taiwan. Taiwan buying less weaponry will not do any damage to its national defense, either, as Taiwan's security does rely on the United States' Pacific Command. Regardless of how many unfavorable remarks Washington has made, it will not alter its security layout in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States has a good understanding of how much Taiwan weighs in its mind. This is why Washington is annoyed with A-Bian.

"Taiwan's UN referendum is nothing but a birdcage game; no matter how excited it gets, it is limited to the island of Taiwan only. Both the United States and China are waiting for A-Bian to step down; nothing will count until A-Bian steps down. Will China

activate its 'Anti-Secession Law'? Clearly that will be a move to ask for trouble for itself! Why doesn't it try to save its face by asking Washington to scold Taipei[?]"

F) "The United States Has Finally Dealt a Heavy Blow to Taiwan"

The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (9/1):

"... The United States should also examine its own mistakes when it comes to Taiwan's UN referendum, which is now running like a derailed train without knowing when it will stop. Washington has always set its mind on the fact that it is President Chen who has been playing tricks for campaigning, so it has put the focus of its negotiations and pressure on Chen, with some DPP and KMT high-ranking officials involved at most. But the problem is that the reason Chen toys with this issue in such a way that the KMT has to follow his game is of course because [the issue] has the support of Taiwan's public opinion. The United States, when dealing with this issue, has completely ignored the Taiwan people's feelings; it has neither proactively communicated with the Taiwan people nor completely, sincerely and respectfully explained Washington's concerns to the Taiwan people. It simply believes that the whole issue hinged on Chen's thinking and that once it could handle Chen, the matter would be resolved. It has no idea that when the momentum of the issue got started, plus the public opinion, not even Chen was able to backpedal it. ...

"Without having communicated fully with the Taiwan people, the [United States] dealt a heavy and early blow [to Taiwan], which got slapped by its old friend without having made any mistake. Such a development has hurt the Taiwan people's heart badly, and the Taiwan people feel that they have been betrayed by a friend. The rift between Taipei and Washington not only exists between the two governments but has also gradually grown deep between the two peoples. The backlash in [Taiwan's] private sector may well transform itself directly into support for the UN referendum. If the United States continues to deal with the matter a rude and aloof approach like a big brother, the situation will further deteriorate. ..."

G) "Chen Shui-bian and George W. Bush are Competing against Each Other to See Who is a Coward [Ed. Note: a game of "chicken"]"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (9/1):

"... The Bush administration's definition of the 'UN referendum' as 'a step toward a declaration of Taiwan independence and an alteration of the status quo' was aimed at forcing Chen Shui-bian to jump out of the car [Ed. Note: as in a game of chicken]. But the fact that Chen has even decorated the Presidential Office as a spiritual fortress of the 'UN referendum' with much fanfare indicated that he has no intent of jumping out of the car. ...

"Chen seems to be on the horns of a dilemma. He has turned the 'UN referendum' into such a sensational and attention-grabbing issue that it is like giving himself no possibility to jump out of the car. But the chances are slim for Chen to allow Washington to change or ask him to back down on his 'cross-Straits policy.' ...

The United States is the most important 'pillar' of Taiwan's survival in the international community. Washington believes that the 'UN referendum' has harmed its policy of 'no change in the status quo across the Taiwan Strait' and has fundamentally violated the 'Taiwan interests.' Taiwan must ponder now whether it wants to repudiate the United States' 'cross-Straits policy' and to deny the U.S. role as a pillar of Taiwan's survival in the international community. Moreover, the purpose of the 'UN referendum' was never to 'enter the UN' but to take advantage of the 'referendum' to ignite public outrage. ... Taiwan cannot possibly enter the UN, and it has fallen out with the United States. Is this indeed the last gift Chen will give to Taiwan? ..."

H) "ROC's Statehood Was Never 'Undecided'"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (9/2):

"... Most likely, Mr. Wilder was referring to the international community's inaction on our repeated bids to take part in international organizations, which have been fiercely opposed by Beijing. Indeed, it was fortunate that Mr. Wilder appeared to leave a door open for a change in U.S. policy by suggesting our status was somehow 'undecided,' rather than choosing to comply with Beijing's claim that our status is 'decided,' meaning that Taiwan is a part of the communist People's Republic of China. Still, we believe it would be better if Washington refrained from declaring our status to be some kind of an open question, since this may prompt Beijing to demand that the issue be 'decided,' such as by orchestrating a resolution in the United Nations Security Council or U.N. General Assembly. ...

"With war still raging in Iraq and Afghanistan and the threat of global terrorism still high, it is clear that the United States has bigger fish to fry on the world stage than deal with our government's aspirations, which are clearly more aimed at scoring points on election day than they are at actually gaining international status."

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